

MINUTES AND MEETING SUMMARY -- DRAFT
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks UGBEP CAC Meeting
Lewistown, MT (Meeting 23)

Council Members: Joe Ball, Sen. Jill Cohenour (absent), Rep. Rob Cook, Darlyne Dascher, Bill Howell, Mike Jensen, Bill McChesney, Charlie Noland, Dustin Ramoie (absent), Craig Roberts, Josh Schrecengost, and Dale Tribby (Chair).

FWP Employees and Conservation Partners: Sonja Andersen, Aaron Clausen, Jake Doggett, John Ensign, Debbie Hohler, Chad Harvey (PF Montana Rep), Justin Hughes, Ken McDonald, Dave Nikonow, Rick Northrup, Ken Plourde, Rick Sojda (Gallatin Valley Pheasants Forever Chapter—Habitat Chair), Graham Taylor, Hunter VanDonsel.

Monday, October 2

8:00 – 2:00 pm:

Justin Hughes, Region 7 Habitat Specialist, introduced himself and provided some background with his experience with habitat and hunting. Welcome, Justin!

Despite wintery weather conditions, Craig Roberts led the Council on tours of the Wolf Creek and Coffee Creek habitat project sites. **Many pheasants were flushed from cover.** Craig gave historical overviews of the project areas and led discussions on current project activities. The future of these project areas is not as well defined.

Council had a delicious lunch at the Denton Café. The snowy conditions cut the tour short, and the council resumed the meeting at the Denton Public Library.

2:00 – 4:30 pm:

Craig continued giving an overview of the project sites and gave a PowerPoint presentation on some of the shrub plantings, habitat maintenance activities, and recommended shrub species for UGB.

Dale thanked Craig, Virg Gluth, and the Central Montana Chapter of Pheasants Forever for their dedication for establishing and maintaining UGB habitats and for the educational tour.

Dale reviewed the minutes from the May 6 and 7. Ken McDonald pointed out that the BMA landowner payment was incorrect in the minutes. Debbie noted and will make corrections before finalizing minutes. Dale would like to invite Jason Kool and Ryan Weiss to our 2018 spring meeting.

Ken McDonald thanked the Council for their continued interest and dedication to the program. He provided program updates to the Council:

- The Governor appointed 3 new FW Commissioners: Tim Aldrich (NW Montana), Logan Brower (NE Montana), and Shane Colton (Central/SE Montana).
- Enforcement and Pittman-Robertson: 30% of the wardens' time will be doing work in the wildlife division. Working with the wildlife managers, a work plan was developed that identified activities the wardens are eligible to do using PR dollars, such as helping with WMAs, UGBEP projects, access projects, and research projects. Wildlife time equates to 700 hours per enforcement person or 70,000 hours total, or 30 FTE.
- Dog training rule: Ken reviewed the proposed rule and EQC's concerns with statute and rule. Ken handed out the rule.
- HB 211 – Sage-grouse population estimate. Using an interpretive population model, it's estimated that in 2017 Montana has 75,000 sage-grouse. Previous estimates are 80,000 (2016); and 30,000 (2011). Population estimates can be highly variable.
- UGBEP expenditure cap and FW Commission meeting. Rick Northrup presented the proposed revision to the FW Commission on August 10, 2017. The FW Commission moved to approve the proposed revision to Page 100 of the UGBEP Strategic Plan as presented by FWP and recommended by the UGBEP CAC.
- PF Farm Bill positions: 3 partner positions. UGBEP contributed \$5,000 per position per year for 3 years. Total obligations are \$45,000. Department needs to ensure a return on the investment as there is a hunting requirement for any expenditure of UGBEP funds.
- Jason Kool had a big meeting in Lewistown to identify challenges/discrepancies/opportunities within the state-wide implementation of the program. The meeting focused on identifying program definition, improving consistency, and developing sideboards for equitable delivery of the Block Program.

Dale concluded the meeting for the day and everyone returned to Lewistown.

Tuesday, October 3 (Meeting held at the Lewistown Public Library)

Dale began the meeting at 8:30 am.

8:30 – 3:00 pm:

Debbie provided handouts that contained summaries on state-wide program accomplishments and fiscal summaries for the 2017 field season. Council was given an overview of project cost obligations, expenditures, and balances. To get a sense on the program's balance in the next 5 years, a report highlighted the program's estimated revenue, known obligations, and estimated expenditures. A similar report detailed the program's estimated revenue, estimated obligations, and estimated expenditures. Debbie also provided the Council with a summary of this year's pheasant release contracts and the number of contracts that have reached a 5-year

release cycle. A request was made by the CAC to have a future review of these projects in 3-5+ years to see how well the actual expenditures follow the projections. Other updates included the status of the VPA-HIP and NFWF grants; habitat management leases, database progress, and contract renewals. Council interacted with discussion over these topics.

Regional staff provided updates to council relative to the 2017 field season and discussed upcoming opportunities:

- Regions 1, 3, and 5. Charlie Holtz resigned from Region 1 in August. Habitat Forever will be announcing the position and looking to fill the vacancy before the start of the new year. – Debbie Hohler
- NWTF/USFS/UGBEP (Region 2) – Dave Nikonow
- Region 4 – Jake Doggett
- Region 6 – Kenny Plourde
- Region 7 – Justin Hughes

Discussion followed for each region.

Lunch was brought in for Council meeting

Public Comment period (1:00 pm): There was no public comment.

Rick Sojda presented the results from surveying Montana County Agents regarding interest and need in upland game bird habitats: “The Future of UGB Extension Programs in Montana—Assessing the needs of County Agents.” We will look to invite a County Extension Agent on our next tour.

Dale Tribby discussed Council member’s exit strategies. Debbie prepared a spreadsheet showing each Council member’s representation, as listed in statute, and start date. Dale Tribby and Bill Howell will leave following the Spring 2018 meeting and Craig Roberts will depart following the fall, 2018 meeting. Dale encouraged the department to plan ahead to ensure the statutory representations will be met.

- Mike Jensen (R6, Chamber of Commerce) offered to leave after this meeting.
- Bill Howell (R3, Conservationist) will leave after the spring 2018 meeting.
- Rep. Cook pointed out that he is term limited in 2018.
- Dale (R7, Upland Game Bird Biologist) is fine with rotating off the Council but department will need to find a replacement for R7 representation.

Council set final meeting dates and locations for 2018:

- **March 26 and 27 in Helena**
- **October 1 and 2 in Conrad**

Hunter VanDoser and Aaron Clausen, PF Farm Bill Biologists, provided updates to the Council on their fields season. Hunter provided a summary on efforts, outreach, and referrals to promote

UGBEP and Farm Bill programs. Aaron provided an overview of Corners for Conservation, a habitat model used in Colorado.

Chad Harvey, PF Montana Rep, introduced himself and discussed his passion and commitment to the resources.

Council input and follow up summarized:

- Charlie highlighted his concerns about the extreme drought of 2017. He asked if there is the possibility of cost-sharing reseeding of CRP. The program can cost-share on reseeding costs. Charlie asked that the 2018 cost-share be brought to the next meeting.
- Dale wants further discussion of pheasant releases funded through UGBEP. Topics to cover are eligibilities, # of pheasant producers (current status), statute, projecting how program revenue and expenditure align with statute (e.g., 25% of the 15% wet aside for bird planting must be spent on pheasant release.)
- The Council should continue reviewing projected revenue/expenditures/obligations work sheets. Are we close in the approximations?
- Jason Kool and Ryan Weiss will be invited to the spring 2018 meeting.
- Dale appreciated the updates on the Habitat Management Leases.

Closing comments: On behalf of the Council, Dale thanked Craig Roberts for the tour and his hard work and commitment to the project areas. Dale also expressed his thanks for to the PF Farm Bill Biologists, FWP staff, and everyone dedicated to the UGBEP. Everyone thanked Mike Jensen for his invaluable insight and dedication to the program. Thank you, Mike!

Meeting adjourned 3:30 pm.

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October 1 and 2 in Conrad